Interview with Frank Snyder, pharmacist's mate with the 6th Naval Beach Battalion, present at Omaha Beach, 6 June 1944. Interview conducted by Jan K. Herman, Historian, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, 29 September 1999.

Where are you from originally?

I was living in Cocoa Beach, Florida when I went into the Navy in December of 1942. I was born in Honolulu, Hawaii. My dad was a career Navy chief pharmacist's mate. And I went in '42 to one of the first 100 companies out of Bainbridge, Maryland main training base--boot camp.

My dad somehow arranged for me to go in as a hospital apprentice second class. So I even had to go to boot camp but I never had the opportunity to go to hospital corps school.

You said you did go to boot camp?

I did go to boot camp.

Where?

At Bainbridge.

Oh that was the boot camp at Bainbridge.

They had a hospital corps school there too but I wasn't eligible because I went in as a hospital apprentice second class. So my request for that was turned down. The result of that was, I never got any medical training at all. Had I gone in as a seaman and had taken the aptitude test, I think I probably would have qualified for hospital corps school, which would have suited me, fine but it didn't work out that way.

So here I am a hospital apprentice second class and my only assignment is at the hospital at Bainbridge, a big sprawling hospital facility. And all I did was to keep head counts in the convalescent ward.

You know the Navy would always keep men in convalescent wards after they had been hospitalized. They were kept in convalescent wards for a week or 10 days usually and that's where the Navy got all it's free housekeeping and scullery and everything else. That's where all those people came from. All I did was do a head count and a bed count in a convalescent ward every night from, I guess it was midnight to 8:00 am. I think it must have been April or May '43 when they were just forming the beach battalion at Camp Bradford, VA.

How did you get involved in that? How did you even hear about it?

I didn't hear about it until I found out I was assigned there.

Where did you get the orders, when you were at Bainbridge?

When I was at Bainbridge in the hospital.

You just got orders that said you were going?

I got orders, that's right.

What did they say?

They just said that there was a draft of 15 or 16 of us that were being sent, all hospital corpsmen, second class hospital corpsmen. We were all being sent to Camp Bradford to join the then forming 6th United States Naval Beach Battalion. That's all I knew when I got there.

What do you remember about when you got there? What was that all about?

Well it was not quite as bad as Bainbridge had been. When I got to Bainbridge they didn't even have drill fields that weren't mud fields. And all the walkways between these new barracks were all wooden planks because of so much mud. You couldn't walk on anything but planks. If you stepped off the planks you were in mud up to your -- halfway up your leggings. It wasn't that bad at Camp Bradford VA, but I guess it was because the weather wasn't that bad.

And Camp Bradford was right near Little Creek?

Little Creek, yes.

So you got there and what do you remember about the training?

Well you know, in looking back on it, not just myself, my opinion of the whole thing was that I got little or no emergency medical training at Camp Bradford or anywhere else. Our training consisted mostly of running the obstacle course one or two times a day and marching sometimes without field packs, sometimes with full field packs, and eventually learning how to go up and down cargo nets, mock ups into landing craft that never left the river.

And then eventually we got some real practical experience by going over the mock ups into landing craft and then running out into the Chesapeake Bay and making landings on Solomon Island beaches among other places.

Most of the training that we all got, including pharmacist's mates, hospital corpsmen and everybody else included there was in Camp Bradford. I don't remember any particular class of instruction or anything that had to do with emergency medicine, you know, first aid, evacuation of wounded. or applying battle dressing or anything else, nothing like that.

What little bit of training I had and I assume everybody in the Beach Battalion had essentially the same was whatever time the individual platoon doctors gave us of their time. And they seemed, and I don't know whether I want to be quoted on this or not, but they seemed not to have any organized pattern of instruction for the 147 corpsmen in the battalion.

There were 144 in the 6th Beach Battalion?

About 144 but that's close and 9 doctors. Nine platoons, one doctor in each platoon.

Did you train with the physicians? Were they around at that time?

Well they were there but we didn't see much of them. I certainly didn't.

Did you get any kind of weapons training at all?

Yes. Now that was the strangest thing. And I can't remember whether this was just before we went to Fort Pierce but it was cold weather so I imagine it was after we came back from Fort Pierce.

Fort Pierce. Now you went from?

Now that's Fort Pierce, Florida. The whole Battalion was transferred down there by troop train. And we trained out of the amphibious training base there in Fort Pierce. There's an estuary there and I'm not sure the name of it.

When did you go there?

Let me think for a minute. I would say that was probably -- it was probably June or July of 1943 that we went down there. And we were there for a couple of months. And we did a lot of amphibious boat training there, actually going out off the coast and landing on the Florida coast line in all kinds of weather.

The first thing that I can remember of the training we had there was to how to rig and how to deactivate booby traps. We all had to do that, but the strangest thing was when we came back from Fort Pierce to Camp Bradford one time, it was two consecutive days, when the whole battalion was sent out to the Dam Neck Naval Gunnery range. They had a long line of anti aircraft weapons of all kinds. Everything ranging from 50 caliber machine guns to 1.1 quads, 20mm, 40mm. And then one old ancient 5-inch 50 caliber open mount gun. And everybody in the battalion had to have some hands-on experience firing every one of those weapons. And I thought that was the strangest thing I could imagine. Medical corpsmen right along with everybody else. You know, here I was second loader on the projectiles for a 5- inch, 50 open mount firing about three rounds at a target being towed -- a sleeve being towed by a plane. And I was a loader on a Swedish Bofors 40mm gun. We had one pointer, one trainer, and one loader. Nice little gun. And I didn't get to fire the multiple 40mm gun mount.

This was just a single 40mm?

A single 40mm mount. A low mounted thing, just a foot or so off the deck. But I'll say the most complicated and-- the one that I despised the most, and they warned us about it, that was the 1.1 quad, 1.1 inch four barrel mount. You had one pointer, one trainer, four first loaders, and four second loaders.

And I was a second loader. When the second loader was passing up the load of clips to the first loader right behind the gun mount, he was passing up a loaded clip and receiving an empty clip from the first loader. So they passed in mid air, knuckle to knuckle.

And we all had a sore hand and sore knuckles when we came back. Some of us had more on the left hand some of us had more on the right depending on what position you were in when passing the clip.

It was sharp?

No it was a metal clip. It was rather -- it was 40mm, about six rounds per clip.

That's a big shell.

It wasn't 40 mm but was like the 40mm. It had a clip. It had about 5, 6, 7 rounds in it. So the whole thing with the shells in it, each clip probably weighed 12 pounds, 14 pounds. And you were swinging that thing up to the deck, which is about 4 feet above where you were standing and you were receiving an empty clip coming down at the same time. So the clips were passing knuckle to knuckle if you get the picture.

I got you. So you were whacking the guy's knuckles next to you?

That's right. As he was passing down with his right hand.

While you were passing up with the other hand.

And I was passing it up with the left hand. So we were hand to hand, you know knuckle to knuckle. So yeah it was lots of fun.

So you couldn't figure out why a corpsmen would be loading an anti aircraft gun?

No. No.

It didn't make sense to you?

No it didn't make a bit of sense.

Did you get any personal weapons training with a carbine?

No, I didn't get any personal training with a carbine or the Springfield but I think I did with a Colt .45 caliber side arm. I fired that there, then after the war I was on a pistol team in the Pacific destroyer fleet. But I had more -- definitely as far as intense training of any kind, I had more intense training in naval gunnery than anything else.

And you still up to this point, when you got back from Fort Pierce back to Fort -- back to Camp Bradford, you still hadn't had any medical training?

No, except just the few little informal chats that we had with our doctors from time to time. I don't recall ever being... I don't think I ever even saw one of those medical packs that we were to carry ashore on Omaha Beach until we were in the staging area near Dorchester outside of Weymouth. That's the first introduction I ever had to the medical field packet.

Each of the corpsmen was issued two of them and they weighed about 20 pounds a piece, something like that. And they carried it in a sling that was made out of the webbing like in the belts.

Do you remember what was in it?

I didn't find out until I was on the beach.

Oh God, that's a funny time to be learning that.

I never saw one open until I was on the beach.

At this point did you have any idea where you were going ? You knew you were going to be involved in some operation but you didn't know exactly where.

No not exactly.

And you didn't know what your job was going to be either, I guess.

Yes. Well they were telling us more than showing us. They were telling us that the main thing that we would be doing we would be evacuating wounded from the beach. But as it turned out we were involved right in the treatment of casualties all around us on the beach before there was ever any thought about trying to evacuate anybody.

So we were piling up the wounded just at or above the high tide mark until landing craft were graciously accepting wounded on stretchers or sometimes walking wounded too. But we had a lot of boat captains, which were the coxswains on the smaller LCVPs. They'd pull in and unload the troops or whatever they had on. They wanted to get the hell out of there. They didn't

want to stand around and wait for somebody to carry two or three or four stretchers on there. They wanted to get out because there was too much firing going on.

Just to step back a second. When you were finishing your training at Camp Bradford after you got back from Fort Pierce. When did you go overseas?

We didn't go over until right around the first of the year 1944, early January '44.

And how did that all transpire?

This was a strange thing. We were transferred to Lido Beach, Long Island. It was kind of a receiving station or something like that. The whole battalion was sent there.

And it was bitter cold, I remember that. And we were issued foul weather gear uniforms that were so large and so elaborate that if folded properly all these various pieces of foul weather gear could be fitted into and would fill an ordinary sea bag. That was one uniform.

This was obviously designed for really cold weather, arctic or something like that. And I have since wondered... I've heard it said, that if the enemy had ever figured out where these Beach Battalions were going they might have better had an idea as to where the invasion was going to be. So I have often wondered if the reason for that type of issue was that we're were trying to make somebody think that we might be going to Norway. But here we were. We had to put these uniforms on completely and the temperature was exactly at 0 Fahrenheit.

This is at Lido?

At Lido Beach, Long Island. There was a little snow on the ground. And we were all lying around absolutely perspiring with the body heat from these things. The heat never got out. And I mean we were suffocating in those doggone things.

Did they put you in barracks there?

Yes. We were in a barracks.

There were other units training at Lido Beach. There was a unit called Foxy 29 made up of medical people--corpsmen and physicians and nurses. Actually corpsmen and physicians who were going to go over in LSTs and stay off the beach and receive the causalities that you guys collected. So Lido Beach was major staging area for that kind of thing.

Kind of a funneling area, I guess.

So how long were you at Lido Beach?

I couldn't tell you exactly but it was less than a week. We were just in and out.

Did they outfit you with all your equipment there? You say they gave you these uniforms, these foul weather uniforms.

They gave us these foul weather uniforms. We packed them all into our seabags and we carried the two seabags overseas with us.

What was in the other seabag?

Our regular uniforms, underwear.

Regular Navy outfits?
Regular Navy issue outfits.

Okay, two seabags. One with this one uniform and then the other with just your regular clothes?
That's right. And when we got to England I have no idea where that seabag with the foul weather gear went. I never saw it again.

You probably went from Lido Beach to New York?
That's right. We went to... I want to say Pier 34 but I'm not sure that's right. Anyway, we were coming out of that big shed there right on the waterfront--one of those piers downtown and I couldn't tell you whether it was East River or Manhattan or the other side.

Probably the West Side.
The Hudson River side, very likely. At any rate, it was where the big old cruise ships used to come in, the big liners, the transatlantic ocean liners. And when we were going to board this thing I heard somebody ask somebody else what ship is this we're going on, the rusty, nasty, looking old thing. Big but obviously hadn't been painted or anything in a long time. Well somebody said, well I heard it was the *Warrantini*.

The what?
Warrantini was the name that he had understood. I said whoa, wait minute, this baby -- this is a 25, 30 thousand ton ship. If it's a liner, it's got to be the *Mauritania,* and that's what it was.

The *Mauritania*?
Yes.

Do you recall the trip over?
Oh yes.

Now wait a minute, if I'm mistaken, you guys had a collision on the way out?
Yeah, on the way out. And I didn't see it. I just heard about it. It wasn't a major thing. We had to stop and have some sheet metal replaced or something like that but I think we lost 1 day maybe it was less than a day.

What kind of accommodations did you all have going over there?
An old unpainted rusty dirty storeroom, about three or four decks down from the main deck. And it had probably been a storage room of some kind when the liner was in service. And the British had built in some long tables. And they had strung about in the compartment I was in, that had strung about I'd say 30 or 40 hammocks. And then there were 30 or 40 thin little mattresses on the deck.

So they probably had 50 or 60 of us in that one room. And our meals, two of them such as they were, were served on those long tables. We had breakfast consisting of gruel and biscuits, and tea, hot tea. Then in the afternoon, which was maybe 4 or 5 o'clock, we had the

second meal and it was a bully beef stew and biscuits and tea and some kind of marmalade or something like that. That was everyday fare.

This sounded like British food to me?

Yeah, that's all it was. They provided all the food we had. And the head was nothing in the world but a long narrow sloping, slanting deck with a water trough in it, a salt water trough in it and a couple of basins or sinks and things like that. I wasn't old enough to shave so I didn't miss that very much.

How old were you then?

I was 18. I had my 19 birthday on D-plus 1.

So how long did the crossing take?

I would say probably something like 9 or 10 days. I couldn't swear to that but it was more than a week. And I remember feeling at first very uneasy about the fact that there were no escort vessels.

And of course we were assured that that was the whole point of the trip. The *Queen Mary, Queen Elizabeth*, and the *Mauritania* were fast. And they would be the largest ships by far in any convoy. They would have been a target for every U-boat that was still in existence out there in the Atlantic. So they relied on their speed and maneuverability. And all three of them made many crossings during the war and they all came through all right.

So how did you and you colleagues fare as far as seasickness and that type of thing?

No, I wasn't seasick. I don't think I ever saw anybody really seasick.

So it was a pretty calm crossing then?

It was and I understood at the time that it was unusual for a winter crossing in the North Atlantic. It's usually pretty nasty. One of the British seaman said, "Don't worry about anything mates unless out in the middle of the Atlantic we have to stop. If you ever hear them engines stop, then you can worry."

Well we were about 5 days out and early one morning the engines stopped. I thought, "Oh God, what's going on now?" And I was where I could get up and look out of one of the main exits on the main deck. And I remember looking out. The sea was like glass but there was a big ground swell. The ship was rolling a little bit very slowly. And I thought I saw a periscope and I though "Oh Lord."

Only what turned out to be a periscope was a British corvette that was lying in the trough between two of these big ground swells. And all I could see was the very little top of the masts. But when it came up on top, gradually on top of that ground swell, well this whole thing came into view. And I thought, "Thank the lord it's not a submarine."

We only stopped as some boat came alongside and brought mail sacks or something aboard, some kind of communications. So we got underway again. And that was the only reason we ever stopped all the way over.

We came into Liverpool on a cold, rainy, cloudy, nasty morning. I've never seen a gloomier looking city in my life than Liverpool. Of course it was wartime and all that but it was just a dirty, nasty, gloomy, depressing city.

And we were off-loaded onto a train, a troop train right then and there just as quickly as they could get us off. And we were on a troop train that took us down first to Kingsbridge in Devonshire, and then trucks took us from Kingsbridge to Salcombe, a little coastal fishing town that's now quite a little resort.

The British had built some wooden barracks for us, these small barracks. They fitted our whole battalion into two barracks buildings. I loved Salcombe. One of the British poets wrote a poem about the crossing of the bar. And I can't remember just exactly what it was but that was written about the crossing of the bar in Salcombe.

I think it was Tennyson.

That could be it. It was a quaint little English coastal village. We were very well received by the British people there. They were very nice.

So you lived in the barracks and you had a mess hall?

No, we didn't have a mess hall. We had to walk down to a place called the Cliff Inn, I recall. And it was operated by the British government in what had been an inn prior to the war. And they had kitchen facilities and everything. Now all of our meals were prepared and served for us there. It was right good food. It wasn't typical British fare at all. It was nice.

Was there any additional training there at Salcombe?

No, not at Salcombe. The only training we had in addition was marching. The only training we had was after we had been in Salcombe for a month or so we were sent by rail out to South Wales through Swansea to a town called Scurlage Castle. And there was a little castle ruin around there.

And we were again in tents, wooden floors at Scurlage Castle and trained there. We did mostly marching but some of the smaller groups have had units that were detached from ours and got some specific training that we didn't get.

Now for example, we were aware of the fact that the radio communications people were being trained with the equipment that they would be using. And the people that were going to be doing the semaphore signaling from the beach with the flags were receiving their necessary training.

And the people that were going to be operating hydrographic and damage control equipment like bulldozers were being trained but not where we were. They were detached day by day and took their training somewhere else. But for those of us who were in the company detachments and the various individual platoons like the platoon officers--platoon doctors--they kept pretty much to themselves. I didn't see much of them there.

So you really hadn't seen much of the doctors back in the states either?

No.

And you didn't see much of them at Salcombe?

No, no.

That's a very odd situation.

I thought it was.

How long were you in Salcombe?
South Wales or in Salcombe?

Salcombe.
Well, we were in Salcombe for a month or so and then went out to south Wales for a couple of months. By that time we're talking about April, mid-April. When we went back to Salcombe, we were there shortly, and somewhere along in, I would say the middle of May, that's as close as I can come to it, we were sent to the staging area near Dorchester. And the staging area was set up for the sole purpose of isolating everybody and preventing anybody from having any contact with civilians anywhere around.

The perimeters of the staging area were patrolled by MPs on foot and in jeeps. And we were warned that we couldn't leave and we couldn't be communicating with anybody outside. And if we did, of course, it was under threat of death literally. And we stayed there until June 3rd.

And we were with... I even remember the numbers of the units that we were with then. It was the first time we had ever seen them. Oh, we knew when we were training in Wales that there was a very set arrangement between the relationship between the beach battalions and the engineer units on the 5th Engineer Special Brigade. The first time I ever heard of 5ESB (5th Engineers Special Brigade) was when we were in Wales. And as it turned out, the Brigades, 5th Engineer Special Brigade consisted of three battalions of Army Engineers, the 37th, the 348th, and one other. I can't remember the number of the third one. Those are the three engineer battalions that made up the 5th Engineer Special Brigade. And we were divided up so that each platoon in the beach battalion was attached to one company of an Army Engineer battalion.

This happened at this point?
That's when we first became aware of the fact that we were attached to and an integral part of the 5th Engineer Special Brigade. Our B Company ... I was in platoon B5... our company was attached directly to a company of the 348th Engineer Battalion of the 5th Engineer Special Brigade.

And they're the ones that we landed with on Omaha Beach. But when we went in to the staging area in Dorchester we were in close proximity to it and it was actually intermingled with the men of the 16th Regimental Combat Team of the 1st Infantry--"The Big Red One."

And right over the hill but part of the same complex, some of the beach battalions, and I think it was 7th Beach Battalion, people were attached to the 116th Regimental Combat team of the 29th Infantry Division. That's how closely we were associated with the initial assault forces.

Were you given Army equipment?
Well we had the strangest assortment of uniforms you ever saw. We had some of the most peculiar getups we had to wear, like paratroop boots and black sweaters and combat jackets and strange markings on our helmets. That was all done in the staging area, putting the gray band around it.

Around the helmet.
And the red rainbow.

The crescent, yes.

That was all done there.

Did you do that yourself?
I didn't. Somebody in the company did that.

Did you at this point trade in your sea bag with all that Navy stuff?
We had it picked up and it was locked up and hauled off somewhere in a truck. And we didn't see it again until we came back from Normandy.

So you had all this Army equipment, the paratroop boots and everything. Was there anything Navy at all about your uniform or was it all just Army? The black sweaters were peculiar too.
I never did figure that out. And we wore that light combat jacket, not that big heavy cloth dark green that some of the Army people wore. It was a lighter weight but it was water repellant.

Did you have that impregnated stuff for the possible gas attacks?
Oh yes, and the gas masks too.

The gas masks?
Yeah.

And the helmet was an Army helmet?
Oh yes, it was an Army helmet and the helmet liner was too. It was all Army issue. I don't know why this was but some of our people had USN stenciled on their jackets and others didn't.

Did you get the medical kits at this point?
Yes, it was while we were at this staging area we were issued the emergency medical field packs.

You had a field pack but still had no instruction on how to use it?
No and we were told not to open it.

You were told not to open it?
Yes.

Because there would have been things like morphine syrettes and all kinds of stuff. And you wouldn't have had a clue on how to use it. When did you leave the staging area for France?
D-Day was originally set for June 5th.

Let me ask you a question before we get into that. How did you learn that you were attached to this Army unit and that suddenly the Navy was out of the picture?
We found that out when we were out in Wales. That's when we found that all of our communications to our battalion and company headquarters all came though the 5th Engineers

Special Brigade. And it was a brigadier general--I don't remember his name--but each one of those battalions in the 5ESB was commanded by an army lieutenant colonel.

Was there some announcement made by your CO at this point?
No. Well not to us, but I guess the officers all knew what was going on.

But you didn't?
No.

You were in the dark about this?
That's right.

Okay, so you're at the staging area and it's time to go.
I bet you've already heard about the raid on the supply tent at Scurlage Castle haven't you?

Tell me about that.
I wasn't actually involved. I knew all about it beforehand and afterwards. They would come over and conscript non-rated people from the beach battalion to go over and serve as mess cooks in the Army mess tent.

And when they came back they had tales of some of the real fine foods that they had over there for the officers but not for the enlisted men. You know how tales go around like that. So they got the ones that were working over there in the supply tent to get all this stuff lined up.

They had cans of fruit cocktail and apricots in heavy syrup and peaches and all kinds of nice stuff that we never saw. And they set them all right next to one wall of this tent. They were going to have a raid at about 2:00 one morning. They'd go over there and cut the tent open and relieve these 10 or 12 cases of food and sneak it back over to the Navy area. And then we were going to have a feast. Well. the Army mess sergeant got wise to it. And when all these guys came in they were just thrilled to death. It was so dark they couldn't see what they were doing. They just brought back these boxes that were sitting all in the right place inside the tent. They cut the tent and took the cases and brought them back to the Navy area and brought them into the tents. And oh man, we were going to have a feast until we found we had 12 cases of sauerkraut. The sergeant had gotten wise to it.

And had rigged it.
He had switched it.

Switched the food.
And he started asking how did you Navy guys like that sauerkraut? Who wants sauerkraut?

But you had to play dumb right?
Yeah sure.

When did you learn you were actually going to France?

We began to have informational sessions where we would go in with a whole company of Navy and a whole battalion of Army engineers.

And we were told about what was to come. We were not given any idea as to where the landings were to be held. That was not identified to us but we knew for example that there were going to be five beaches. Two of them were to be American, two of them British and one Canadian. And that there were going to be airborne troops that were going in too. It was going to be somewhere in France I think is all they ever told us.

And I did a silly thing. I went back to our tent after that was over one afternoon and I had piece of paper. And I sketched on that thing to the best of my recollection what the north coast of France looked like. I shaded in an area from the base of the Cotentin Peninsula over to Le Havre.

You were right on the money.

I was right on the money. One of the bosun's mates asked me where I got that. I said I was just guessing. He said, "Well you might guess right. I don't know where we're going anymore than you do. Don't leave crap like that around." I said, "Don't worry, I won't do that again."

Anyway, we had these informational sessions where they were telling us basically how it was going to go. The paratroopers were going to go in first and then our beach battalion was to go in right along aside the initial assault forces. They mentioned the 16th Regimental Combat Team of the 1st Infantry. That's the first time I ever heard them identified as a unit. We were all in the staging area so that nobody was going to find that out.

On the morning of June 3rd we were loaded onto a convoy of trucks and obviously there were more trucks than just enough to carry our battalion in. There was a mile of six-wheeled trucks on the staging area. And as fast as they were being loaded they were being run out the gate onto the highway to Dorchester and then from Dorchester on into Weymouth.

By that time we had a pretty good idea that this was really it now. As we were coming through the outskirts of Dorchester and especially when we had to go into the outskirts of Weymouth all the British civilians were standing along the route and hanging out of windows and waving American and British flags.

We went right down to the waterfront, came off the trucks, and were loaded onto landing crafts of various kinds. Then we went out on an LCM (Landing Craft Medium). There were too many APA attack transports to be docked in Weymouth Harbor. We were taken out to the USS *Henrico* (APA-45)

And when we got aboard there we quickly found that men from the 16th Regimental Combat Team from the 1st Division were right on that same ship with us. That's the first inclination we had about what an initial part of this thing we were to play. Whatever it was, we were going to be in the thick of it, we knew that.

You had all you equipment at this point?

Oh yes, we carried it.

You had everything?

We carried it aboard, yes.

You had your .45 and your?

Oh no. I don't think anybody had a .45 but.

But the officers?
The officers.

Okay. So you had nothing but your uniform. Were you wearing the impregnated suit at this point?
Yes.

For the gas. You had your gas mask.
Gas mask.

Your helmet, your medical kit?
Yes, two bags.

Your medical kit which you still didn't know how to use?
Nope. Hadn't even opened it, told not to.

So no weapons at all for you?
No weapons at all for any of the enlisted men.

But you had your helmet with the insignia on it now with the red. . . ?
The rainbow, whatever they called it. Some were given Red Cross arm bands. I did not get one. None of the corpsmen in my unit had Red Cross emblems on our helmets.

Rainbow.
And the gray band around the bottom of it.

And the gray band. And nothing on the uniform to indicate you were Navy? You didn't have the USN stenciled on?
Mine didn't. Some of them had USN but I never really paid any attention to whether it was just the petty officers or not. I don't know.

So this was the day you boarded the APA that was the 5th or was that earlier?
That was the 3rd.

That was the Th, okay.
Yes. And we went out that night and it was bad weather but *Henrico* sailed on the night of the 4th. And the weather just got worse and worse as we went out in the Channel. And apparently we were all, the whole fleet was being turned around at one point and we sailed back into Weymouth harbor late on the night of the 4th and early on the morning of the 5th. We stayed there until the night of the 5th when we sailed out again. Only that time we went all the way across.

What time of day was it when you left on the 5th?
It was at dark or just before dark.

And headed out again?

Yes. They didn't want to do it in daylight I guess. That makes sense. It was bad weather. It wasn't flying weather for anybody but I guess they weren't taking any chances. Well not only that, but we found out later that there were a lot of ships that had gone out ahead of ours like the minesweepers. They had something like 100 minesweepers that were going all the way across the Channel ahead of the invasion fleet. So that would have been a give away by itself I guess. And they had to sail before we did.

So they turned around too?

Oh they all came back. As far as I know they all came back in. The Germans weren't sending out any E-boats.

So you left on the night of the 5th again and you went out. How long did the crossing take?

All night.

Did you sleep that night at all?

I don't think so. Fitfully but I don't think so. There were about 50 or 60 of us in a hold with a yellow Piper Cub airplane. We could have put a lot more stuff in that hold but that's all that was in there.

The Piper Cub was all disassembled?

No. It was all assembled ready to go. All they had to do was open the cargo hatch and take it out.

The wings were on it too?

Everything. It was ready to fly.

That's interesting. I guess it was a spotter plane.

I guess so. I never did see where it landed but I'm sure that's what it was.

So what do you remember about the next morning of the 6th when you got up and went up on deck? Did you go up on deck right away?

Yes. We started to go up at one time and they sent us back down because they wanted to get the assault teams off first. They didn't want us crowding the decks; they wanted us out of the way. So we went back down and in fact some of us went to the galley and had a nice breakfast. Everybody didn't go but I did. I was hungry.

Do you remember what you ate?

Steak and eggs.

Oh, the traditional steak and eggs.

Oh yes. So then after awhile they let us go up on deck and of course it was broad daylight by the time we went up on deck. And when we first went out on the deck and were

ready to start lowering into whatever landing craft came alongside, they were already bringing back some of the first casualties from the beach, just a very few.

Had you heard the bombardment?

I heard the big guns from the *Texas* and the *Augusta* but that's all I heard. When the *Texas* fires a broadside you're going to hear that thing from miles around.

You couldn't see the shoreline could you?

No, we were out too far. We were out some 12 miles I think. So we were finally loaded into the LCT-600.

LCT-600.

Yes and that wasn't our entire company. That was part of our platoon and part of B-4 or B-6 platoons.

When you loaded in the LCT, had you been briefed earlier as to what you were supposed to do when you went into the beach? Did you knew what your role was or not?

Treat the casualties. And get them wherever we could find safe cover for them. But we were not to try to move any into evacuation mode until we were told. Well, by that time I was detached from the people in my unit. I never saw then again until D-plus 1. We had been told that we were to be landed on "Fox-Green" beach but were waved off as a destroer moved in extremely close and raked the beach to the left. We then moved right and landed on "Easy Red" beach.

Did you loss track of them on the beach?

On the beach, yes. And I know that for the simple fact that Dick Borden,who is now a doctor, Dick and I were good friends. We went off the ramp or started off the ramp at the same time let me correct that. When the LCT grounded on the sand and the ramp went down, there was a heavy shell, probably an 88, which landed right near the ramp.

And some of the people who were already off the LCT trying to get into the surf. The first thing I saw was an Army officer. I want to say he was a major but I'm not sure of that. It looked like he was waving a white stick around. And I couldn't imagine what in the world was that.

What he was waving around was the lower two thirds of his humerus, just the bone. So the rest of his arm had been shot away. And there was already one of the.. I think it was one of the Army medics who was already down on the upper part of the ramp with him. I went over and the two of us managed to get a tourniquet on there so he wouldn't bleed to death. And the other guy gave him a shot of morphine. He had a syrette and the guy was fighting us. This officer was fighting us. You know he was hysterical. And we were making sure that he went back on the landing craft. We didn't want to try and drag him off into the surf. But by the time we got him away from the ramp a little bit, the LCT was already backing off.

So the man they called the boat hook on the LCT--the bow man--grabbed hold of this Army man and dragged him back away from the ramp. And the solider and I went off the ramp into the water and ran toward shoreline. The tide was -- I'm trying to think -- the tide was nearly high when we went in. So this must have been some 5 hours after H hour near as I can figure.

Oh but there was one interesting thing that I forgot and I hope that I'm not confusing you.

No, no.

By throwing things in. I'm trying not to overlook anything. We were making -- we were in the LCT making a run for the beach and within I'd say half a mile of the beach. Then we could see the shoreline. We could see the explosions and the smoke and the flame and everything on the beach.

And while we're watching that and wondering well what part of that are we going to land in you know, what came up beside us but an American destroyer, or it could have been British, came sweeping by us at I guess 20 or 25 knots. It was headed right straight for the beach.

And he got within I guess a quarter of a mile or less from the beach and he turned broadside to the beach and slowed down to just a crawl. And that was the first I ever saw of the awesome firepower of a destroyer if they're shooting everything they've got.

They were firing six 5-inchers and probably eight 40 millimeters and a bunch of .50 caliber and 20mm guns on the left flank of that beach where we were headed. And the left flank of the beach just disappeared in a cloud of smoke and flame.

And we heard later that that really turned the tide on that particular point of the beach, when nobody had been able to get across that beach until that area got shot up by that destroyer. And I have since heard several statements attributed to different people at that point who said "Thank God for the Navy. It was the destroyers that did that.

And that one destroyer wasn't the only one who did that. That was done up and down all the beaches so I understand. And the heavy points of resistance took a lot of fire from those destroyers. And a lot of that enemy fire was squelched.

Anyway, we went in and after dragging that poor Army major back onto the deck and getting down the ramp another shell, a big one; it was too big for a mortar. It must have been an 88 landed close by.

That was the one that wounded him?

The first one.

Oh there was another one?

This was a second one. The first one was the one that wounded him and apparently there were bodies in the water. So it not only wounded him, it probably killed several people in that first one.

Anyway I'm making a mad dash to the beach when I see this light tank (It could have been an armored car) that's not moving. And I ran over and got behind that and somebody yelled at me. "Get away from that damn thing, they're still shooting at it." So I got away from that damn thing. And, in fact, before I got away from it I could hear machine gun bullets rattling off the metal side of that thing.

There was a little bank; I wouldn't call it a bluff. It was a little bank about 3 feet high right at that point. And I cowered right up next to that thing until there was a let up in the mortar fire. They were walking those mortar shells up and down the beach. You could see them coming five, six, seven, just in a line, explosions walking down the beach.

I went up to the dune line and looked around for anybody in my unit and I didn't see any red rainbows or green or gray bands or anything like that or any USNs, or anything else. But there was an aid station right at the high tide mark where the sand was still wet and it was Army. And I assumed that it had to be 348th Engineer first aid or it might have been a 16th Regimental Combat Team, but it was Army all right.

And I just walked over there and plopped myself down in amongst them and asked if I could help. So they grabbed my field packs and opened them to see what was in there. It was the first I ever saw them open. I didn't open them. And they had me making emergency first aid tags. They had tags like we'd never seen before. This Army EMT tag was completely different from the one that we had seen in the staging area. I guess I got to be a "go-fer" before I left that outfit.

At this point there's still bullets whizzing all over the place though?

Oh yes, and mortar shells and occasionally the bigger stuff like the 88's. They were plopping all around. And there was this Army first sergeant. He had three chevrons and two stripes underneath. What's that?

Three chevrons and two stripes underneath?

Five stripes.

A master sergeant maybe?

I think he would have had three and three whatever this was. He was a pretty high ranking sergeant and he had a Red Cross arm band. And they just treated me like one of their people, you know. He said go do this go get that, come here and so forth. And he said "Run down there to the water line,". Of course, the water line was receding by that time "and see if you can find any stretchers."

Well, the stretchers were all bundled up with some first aid equipment in them and a flotation like a life jacket or something at each end. And I was going down with one of the Army men and we were finding these things and dragging them up and they'd open them up and see what was inside. And they were using whatever they found in there.

Every time you went out from under that bluff you were in a field of fire?

Oh yes, sure. But after 2 or 3 hours we noticed we didn't see the machine gun bullets bouncing off the water anymore. We were under the mortar and artillery fire. Anyway, we dragged a bunch of those things back up and we were piling up wounded that we had treated then. And all the wounded were right within, I guess, a couple of hundred yards of this aid station. And they were ready to be evacuated.

One of the last things we were told in the staging area was that the Army would be responsible for aid being provided down to the high tide mark. Beach masters had charge of everything between high and low tide mark and beach battalion medics, doctors, and corpsmen would be responsible for final treatment and evacuation--actually getting the wounded onto the landing craft.

At this point it was dusk and getting almost dark. Landing craft were few and far between. The beach was being choked with wreckage--wrecked boats, wrecked tanks, trucks, bodies everywhere. The boats weren't even getting in for awhile. It must have been 3 or 4 hours the boats weren't even coming in at all. They couldn't get in. So they couldn't bring in reinforcements and we couldn't evacuate wounded for awhile.

I guess it got to be well dark and I don't know what time... It could have been 8:00, 9:00, 10:00 at night. The doctor who was in charge of the Army aid unit was getting everybody together. He said, "Come on, we're gonna move this aid unit to the top of the bluff." You know,

it was quite a prominent bluff there at Colville, Verville. I don't know if you ever seen that beach yet or not. Have you?

No, I haven't been there.

Well that bluff is about 100 to 150 feet high, and fairly steep up the side of that thing. So he was going to move them up over the bluff. That's what he said. And he said, "Come on soldier. Grab that and let's go."

I said, "Wait minute, I'm not a soldier, I'm Navy. I've been helping you because I can't find my own unit." And he said, "Well good luck to you." And he turned and started to go away. Then he turned and said, "These 15 or 16 men we have stretched out over here on the sand dune... Look after them until we can get them evacuated. As it turned out, there wasn't much of anything I could do. They were pretty quiet. And I didn't have anything to treat them with. I didn't have any morphine syrettes or anything.

And you hadn't had any training.

No.

How many were there?

I guess there were about 14 or 15.

They were pretty bad shape?

Well I think some of them were dead at that point but they were very quiet. They were all covered with blankets. Anyhow, I stayed there until it must have been 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning when there was another kind of an Army medical unit that I don't know who or what they were. They came in and just kind of took over where this aid station had been set up. And they started caring for and moving these wounded up farther away from the beach. And I realized well that I wasn't needed there anymore so I was beginning to think maybe now would be a time for me to find my outfit. I was going around asking questions. Is the 6th Beach Battalion staying here?

An MP came over and grabbed me by the arm and turned to one of his sergeants and says, Here is another straggler. Well bring him over here and we'll take him up the side of the bluff. So that's where I went from maybe 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning until dawn. I was kept in a foxhole up there on the side of the bluff.

In daylight I was able to come back down on the beach and start looking around. And I found my people.

You found them?

I found them all right. They were maybe close to a thousand yards away from where I was. A long way, two thirds of a mile. I guess.

I bet you were glad to see them at that point?

Well yes. They seemed rather glad to see me. I think they thought I was one of those killed in action or something, I don't know. Anyway, from then on it consisted of transporting stretcher cases from the comparative safety of the beach battalion's aid station down to the water line and getting them on the landing craft. But here again we ran into a big problem.

All the morning of D-plus 1 these boats coming in these coxswains came in and unloaded whatever they had. They didn't want to hang around and wait 3 or 4 minutes for somebody to deliver three or four stretcher cases. Some of them did. Some of them would wait very patiently but some of them absolutely would not do it.

It was at that point I saw one of our guys. I heard later on he was a carpenter's mate.

What was his name?

I don't know his name. I never heard his name. He was a carpenter's mate. And I saw him swimming parallel to the shore out to an LCVP--a small landing craft where there was a wounded man hanging off the stern of that landing craft yelling for help. And I guess he was wounded. He couldn't climb the rope or whatever. This man was swimming with all of his clothes on.

And this carpenter's mate swam out to him and managed to pry him loose from the rope and dragged him in to where we were able to drag him up to our aid station. That was the only one that I saw right at that time.

So the aid station that you're talking about right now...?

It was the 6th Beach Battalion. Platoon B-5.

The 6th beach battalion aid station.

Platoon B-5, yes, Dr. Guyton.

What did that station look like? If you looked at it what would you see?

Well, you'd just see the big dark green tent and a bunch of folding tables and boxes and bags and various stuff stacked all around it. And some sandbags off to one side where there was a slit trench next to the remains of a seawall.

So there was protection in case there was any further artillery fire, which was receding by that time. And mortar fire was no longer coming down. It was just the artillery. The Germans had a lot of 88s located 2 or 3 miles inland. And they were still hitting ships--LSTs and LCIs. The British had an LCT that was much bigger than the American LCT. And they were hitting some of them every time they came in. I found out for myself later on I had to piece together what I was seeing--this was days later--I was able to piece together what they had been doing. I got up into one of those emplacements... As we came toward the beach this would have been on the left flank on that bluff. There was a regular... looked like ordinary pillbox. Just a slit was all you could see from the front but there was an entrance from the back of it. I went down inside that thing and I couldn't figure.. I thought that I was looking at a pillbox that hadn't been completed because there was no gun in it. But you know what it was? I figured that out for myself. They had a firing slit and a mural painted just over it on the wall that was a reproduction of what you saw when you looked out that firing slit, a reproduction or a painting of the beach as it appeared. It was all covered with numbers--firing coordinates. That was nothing in the world but an artillery spotting post.

These guys, these Germans had been sitting up there and they'd see an LST come in at 25A,C16 and they call it in to the gunner 2 or 3 miles inland and they had already pre-fired all their guns. They were hitting just exactly what they wanted to hit.

He was like forward observer.

Sure. That's what he was. He didn't have a gun in there at all. There was no gun-mount.

Just a radio is all he needed.

That's all he needed. And I imagine there were others like that up and down the beach but that's the only one that I ever saw. But it was in pristine condition, had never been hit.

So when you say there was a mural, the mural was inside?

It was inside painted on the wall above the firing slit.

And the coordinates were superimposed on those spots?

On the painting.

So if they saw an LST in that general position on the real thing they would just call in that coordinate?

They'd call in the coordinates. About a minute or two later a shell would come in. So that's where a lot of the damage came from. And I kind of figured out later too, and this is just my own deduction, and I still think I'm right. I think that's the reason they were never able to hit his bulldozer. By the time they called in the coordinates on him he'd moved.

When you landed on the beach in that LCT and the ramp went down and you went in the drink there, how far offshore were you?

A hundred feet maybe.

A hundred feet. So when you went into the water how far up did the water come on your body?

Halfway between my knees and my hips.

And when you got to that Army aid station did it look pretty much the same as the Navy one? Was it a tent with tables spread out?

There was no tent. No, everything was out in the open. The sand was still wet.

At that point.

No tent. No cover of any kind.

Just in the open?

Yes.

Under the bluff?

Well, in fact the bluff had petered out at that point. There wasn't much bluff there but they had to get over there to get away from that tank, I guess. This is not the bluff noted later. This was only a low embankment, 3 to 5 feet high--higher on the left, lower on the right.

But your 6th Beach Battalion aid station had a tent and that was under the bluff?

No there was no bluff over there at all.

There was nothing?

No. Well I say no bluff there was no little bank. That bluff, let's get that cleared up right now. That bluff started about 100 yards or maybe 200 yards inland from the dunes and went up rather sharply about to 150 feet of elevation.

But what I was talking about... Where that tank was when I first got out of the water, there was a little bank about 3 or 4 feet high next to that. That was tapering off to the right over where the Army aid station was. By the time I got over there, there was no longer any little bank. It was maybe 1 foot high. It petered out over at that end.

Okay, I understand now. So this is a day later now--D plus 1--when you're back with your unit again. What were you doing then?

Well, we were treating casualties that had already been treated inland. They were being funneled down to us. We were not receiving any casualties in our immediate area anymore. Or if they were it was very, very sporadic, very rare. If an LST got hit we didn't generally get any wounded off that.

They were doing what they called drying out with those LSTs starting the afternoon of D plus 1. Did you know about that?

They were bringing them up on the beach.

And letting the tide run out and leaving them high and dry. A lot of them also took a beating that first afternoon into D plus 2.

Now you were getting the casualties ready and trying to get transportation.

Yes. We had to hand carry them down either two or four of us to a litter. We had to set them on the sand and wait for a landing craft that would accept them. Sometimes we'd have four or five stacked up along the sand there waiting for a landing craft that would come in and would take them.

By the afternoon of D plus 1 we weren't having too much of a problem anymore. The artillery fire was not being directed at them. It was being directed at the larger vessels.

Were you still seeing ships being hit out there?

Yes, occasionally.

When did the fire slacken? When did they stop?

What kind of fire?

The artillery fire.

The artillery fire kept up to the best of my recollection until pretty much the afternoon or evening of D plus 1. By that time, so I understand, the front lines had moved in some 1500 to 2000 yards. They were moving their artillery back then. They couldn't use them as they had at first.

And once those spotter pill boxes or, whatever they were, were overrun then they didn't have the advantage of forward artillery observers anymore.

Exactly right. They were still firing sporadically, randomly apparently at nothing in many cases. You could see shells bursting where there wasn't anything, you know. So they weren't having directed fire as they had at first.

What was the weather like at D plus 1 or D plus 2? Had the sun come out?

No, it was still overcast but not rainy, not that cloudy, just a high overcast as I recall. In fact, from then on about D plus 2 or 3 it was very nice weather until the 19th.

And then you had those terrible storms.

Yes, we sure did.

Were you there then?

Oh yes. We didn't leave to go back to England until D plus 22, which was about the 28th of June.

So, you were there for the big storm. Did you see those big piers being wrecked out there?

Oh yes, the rhinos, the rhino ferries. And they made docks out of some of those too. And even some of the Mulberry ships were damaged out there in the Channel.

Where were you during the storm?

Right where we were.

Right in that same area?

Yes, but we had had to move some of our supplies back as the waves got higher up on the beach. We never left that area until we were closed up and shipped out. We stayed right where we were.

And still off loading patients?

Well D plus -- I'm a little vague on this -- Late afternoon of D plus 1 or certainly D plus 2 we began to receive German walking wounded. Some of them were bandaged and some of them weren't, but they were all walking wounded. I don't remember that we had any stretcher cases that came in German uniforms.

You put a guard over them?

Oh yes. MPs came in with them and stayed with them and marched them off to the LSTs. They had one LST that was right close to us that was being used as a central loading point for German prisoners. They were coming from all directions from time to time. And they were running them down the beach.

Did they seem like a sullen lot or were they just glad to be out of the war?

I think they were glad to be out of the war. Most of them were so young. That's the thing that got me. My gosh I was 19 years old. These kids were younger than me, most of them.

So you stayed. Were you there when the C-47s started coming in because they put an airfield up on the bluff or an airstrip or something?

Yes they did. In fact, our commander E.C. Carusi was hit in the shoulder by some spent flak. It a 20mm shell. Fortunately, it didn't explode. but it really messed his shoulder up pretty

badly. I understood that he was one of the very first casualties to be evacuated by air from the top of the bluff where the Army Air Corps had put down metal.

Marston mats, I think they were called.

Yes. And he was evacuated by air from up there. But what kind of a plane it was I don't know.

Could you see them coming in?

No. We could hear them but we couldn't see them.

Couldn't see them?

No.

So you were there until when?

D plus 22, it was the 28th.

D plus 22, okay.

Now in Jonathan Gawne's book he lists a number of the LST on which the 6th Beach Battalion was returned to England. My unit, B Company--as far as I know--went back on the LST numbered 1099. And that's the one he shows in the book so I know that our whole battalion was not on the 1099. They were on some other LST. But we didn't all go back on one vessel.

And we understood at the time too that the tank deck of the 1099 was filled with German prisoners and we were all sacked out on the upper deck, the weather deck.

While you were on the beach all those days, were you eating K rations?

Well at first it was K-rations and then we began to get some C-rations which were a whole lot better. But about D plus 4 or D plus 5 there was an Army mess unit, as they called it, that had set up shop right up on the top of the bluff. And we took all of our meals up there. We just walked up there with our mess kits and lined up along with the Army and had their food. It was real good.

I guess by that time you guys realized the invasion had been successful. You could just look out and see all those ships.

Oh sure.

And stuff landing on the beach every few minutes.

And all these hundreds and hundreds of German prisoners being brought across the beach. We were pretty sure then that it was working out the way it was supposed to.

But you certainly had seen a lot of death and destruction by that time.

Oh lord. Last night when I was trying to sleep and I was going over in my mind the things that I wanted to try and remember to tell you, and I swear I still get nervous when I recall some of these things. I get upset. I guess I will the rest of my life.

Yeah you never forget that stuff.

No, I don't suppose so.

I've asked some of the people I've interviewed if they had seen the film Saving Private Ryan and whether they thought it was an accurate portrayal. Did you see the film?

Yes, I did. I told myself for a long while that I didn't want to see it because I had had flashbacks for 2 or 3 years after Normandy. I thought if it's going to trigger that again I don't want to go through that again. But at our 1999 reunion in Columbia, Missouri I talked to a number of people who at first were very adamant about the fact that they didn't want to see it. And I agreed with them. I didn't either. But some of them had finally gone to see it and they were glad that they had. So I said to myself maybe there's something cathartic about it. I'll go see it too. And it was in a way... I can't say it was too realistic. It was not. Things that you see at a time like that, I think your mind shuts out a lot.

I know that there were periods of time on that first few hours on the beach... I know there were periods of time that I have no idea what all was crammed into a period of 3 or 4 hours. Looking back on it, I think it had to be 6 or 8 hours and yet it seemed like it was only an hour or maybe 45 minutes. And that couldn't have been. All the various kinds of injuries and things that I had seen couldn't have all been crowded into 45 minutes. That would not have been possible.

Did it seem that they had done a decent job in doing the film?

I thought so.

What happened after you got back to England?

We went back to Weymouth and went to Salcombe again for a short while. We were eventually transferred back from Salcombe to Liverpool. We went aboard the former Italian liner *Monte Grande* that had been christened the *Monticello*, an American Navy transport.

We went back to New York on the *Monticello*, however you want to pronounce it. My berthing space was in the old swimming pool up off the main deck inside it. And it was a black and white tile very unattractive tile swimming pool.

And the only other thing that I remember about that trip was... At that time I was prone to have very severe headaches from time to time. And I hadn't had one for several months, but boy I had a doozy on the way back on the *Monticello*. They put me in the ship's hospital for about 3 days. I never found out what those headaches were from.

I guess then that that was the last of the 6th Beach Battalion?

Yes. We were all given survivors leave or some special kind of leave we when we got back to New York. They had given us travel chits so we could go wherever we wanted to on the trains. I was only in New York that one night, and I was on a train to Florida the next morning. I remember I hadn't been able to contact my family at all. And I didn't even know at that time whether they ever knew or realized that I and my unit were involved in the invasion, but when I got off the train I had my Navy blues on and white hat. I walked from the train station uptown. My dad's office was there right about maybe half a mile from the train station. Somebody called him. He saw me walking down the street toward his office. That was the first they knew that I was back.

In my journal--and it's turned out to be quite a lengthy thing... One of the addenda that I'm putting on the end is a section that I have entitled "A few heroes." There were a lot of heroes on Omaha Beach. Some of them were our people and some of them weren't.

But one of them has a definite medical connection so I thought I'd mention him. That's Dick Borden. Richard W. Borden and I were best buddies in the beach battalion, the same platoon. We got separated when we came off the ramp in that LCT. And it turns out that one of the things that he did for which he was awarded the Bronze Star, and I was not there to see it when he did it, but I heard it firsthand from Dr. Gatton, our platoon doctor.

What he had done was very unusual. There was a black man who was on one of those barrage battalion teams that was coming off of some kind of a landing craft and the craft got shot up. Several of the people were thrown in the water. And this black man was thrown into the water and couldn't swim. When he was dragged up on the beach, he was not breathing. Dick Borden was the first one to get to him and he was resuscitating him or trying to until he suddenly realized the man had swallowed his tongue.

So Dick reached in with his finger and pulled the tongue out and started CPR again and the guy swallowed his tongue again. And I think he had done it two or three times. And Dick had a very ingenious solution to that. He reached in his medical field pack and removed a large diaper sized safety pin and pinned the man's tongue to his chin. I often wondered if the guy lived. It was a very unusual situation.

I'll bet you saw a lot of heroism that day.

I did. I recall seeing one of the British size LCT's that came in loaded with trucks and ammunition take a direct hit on the tank or well deck. There was fire and exploding ammunition going off in this thing. We could hear a man in there yelling for help. This soldier must have heard him and climbed up the side of that thing, and he was scaling the steel hull. It was about 6 or 7 feet high. And the guy went over the top and down into the well deck just in time for the ammunition and gasoline to blow up. And I thought, "Well there was a hero if there ever was one." And probably nobody will ever know who he was or that he had even done that. It was just an example of some of the heroics that happened on that beach.

Frank Snyder's Postscript

The 6th Beach Battalion was not decommissioned until several weeks after we reported to the amphibious training base at Oceanside, CA. When we broke up as a unit our people became the nucleus for two or three new beach battalions. I was assigned to the 9th Beach Battalion for a very short while but one day an order came down for immediate transfer of five or six corpsmen to the newly constructed dispensary building.

My first work assignment there was scraping paint off the new windows. When the unit became operational in a week or so, I was assigned to the emergency room. There, for the first time in my Navy career, I actually had work associated with medical care of patients.

Most patient visits consisted of sore throats, abrasions, etc., but I was quickly teamed with another corpsman (2nd class PhM) and became quite proficient at suturing lacerations.

Much later (1946 thru 1948) I was assigned to the Pacific Destroyer fleet. As luck (?) would have it the entire medical department on the destroyer consisted of a chief PhM and myself (3rd class PhM). I will not identify the name of either the ship nor the chief as he was a victim of acute alcoholism and was merely attempting to serve out his "twenty" and retire. I seldom ever saw him except on the days he signed the medical log which I maintained and the pharmacology record which only he could be responsible for.

I suppose the high point of that trip to the orient was the night our captain suffered a head injury while the chief was incapacitated. The only medical expertise available to me was a Navy doctor at a base some 200 miles distant. I relayed my findings to him and was told that what I had done was sufficient. The skipper arrived in port O.K.